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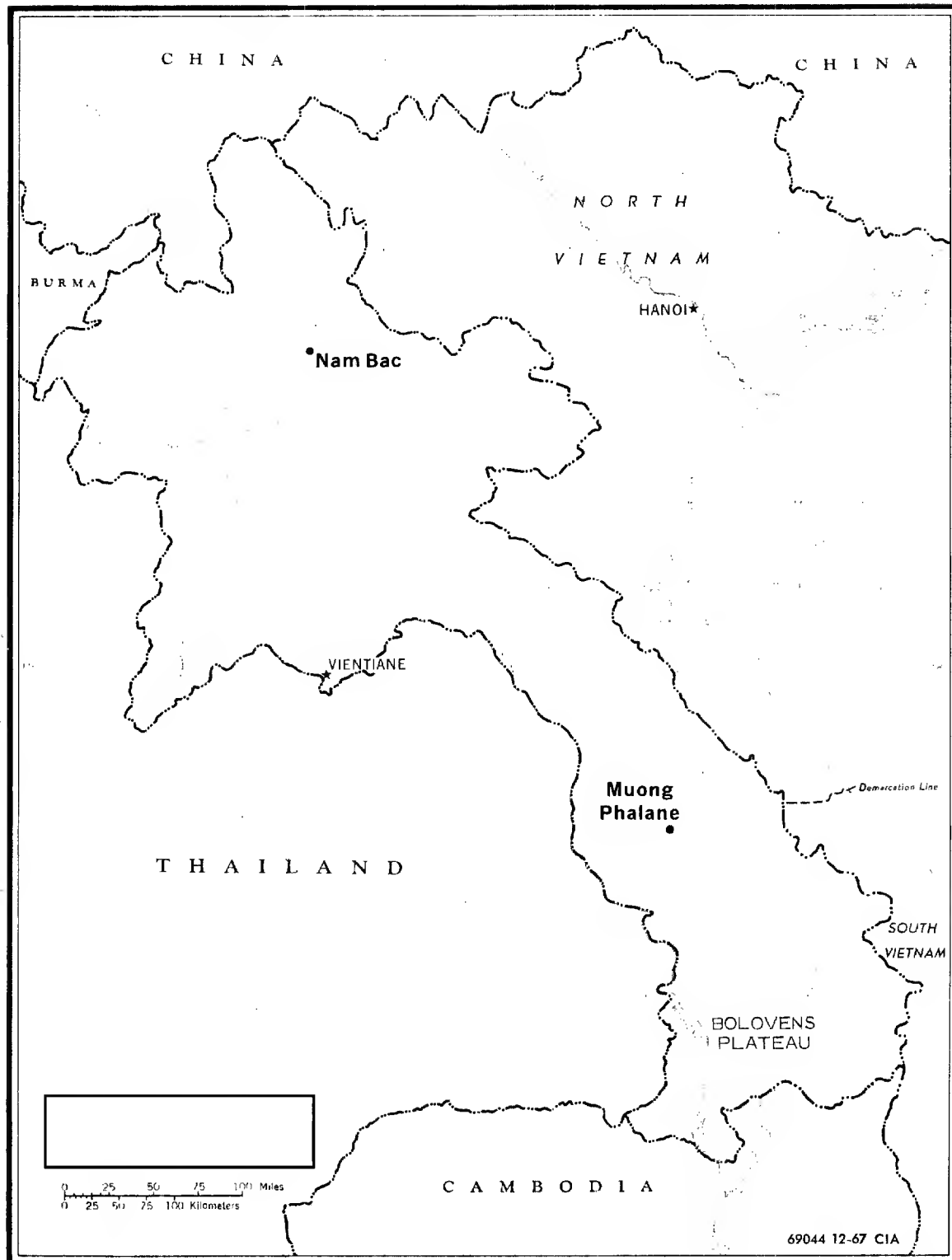
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LAOS



Laos: Communist forces are keeping up their pressure against government positions.

An enemy unit, estimated at about battalion strength, raided the government base and airstrip at Muong Phalane on 25 December, and destroyed most of the camp's facilities, including the USAID and Air America buildings. Although government reinforcements apparently have moved into the area, they have not yet reoccupied Muong Phalane.

Preliminary reports suggest that the attack was specifically aimed against the US presence at Muong Phalane. Two American technicians who manned a navigational station which assists US air operations in southern Laos are missing. The station itself apparently was not damaged.

The attack on Muong Phalane is the first significant enemy action in this part of the panhandle in over a year. It may be related to recent attacks farther south in the Bolovens Plateau area. These operations appear to be part of a new Communist campaign to forestall stepped-up Allied efforts to interdict the infiltration corridor.

In northern Laos, the Communists launched a mortar attack on the government airstrip at Nam Bac on 24 December. Continuing reports of a Communist buildup in the vicinity suggest that more ground assaults against Nam Bac's outlying defenses may be in the offing. Government troops are being repositioned in an effort to reduce their vulnerability.

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